

Marine Area 4B Marine Fish Management Draft Management Objectives and Alternatives for Public Comment

Marine Area 4B encompasses the waters in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca from the Sekiu River west to the Bonilla-Tatoosh line near Cape Flattery at Neah Bay.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is in the process of developing specific management objectives and a range of alternatives for managing marine fish in this area. The process has been structured to include wide spread public input and began with the formation of an ad hoc focus group of interested citizens that provided input and advice to the department during the development of draft objectives and a range of alternatives that will be presented to the public at a series of meetings throughout the region.

The public is invited to comment on the draft management objectives and range of alternatives by either attending public meetings scheduled throughout the region or by providing comments in writing.

Public meeting schedule:

- **August 23** – 5:30-7:30 p.m. University Branch of the Seattle Public Library, 5009 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA
- **August 24**- 7:00-9:00 p.m. Department of Social and Health Services Office, 201 West First Street, Port Angeles, WA
- **August 26**- 7:00-9:00 p.m. Room 175 of the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

Send written comments by U.S. Mail or email through December 4, 2010 to:

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The department will brief the Fish and Wildlife Commission on the draft objectives and range of alternatives and the input received at the public meetings at their meeting December 2-4 in Olympia where there will be the opportunity for public testimony.

Draft Management Objectives

Management objectives for state managed recreational and commercial fisheries in Marine Area 4B will be defined using existing RCW's, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Policies, the Puget Sound Groundfish Management Plan, and the Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan. Marine Area 4B management objectives can be added provided that they are consistent with existing policies and objectives.

The following set of draft objectives were developed considering input from the Marine Area 4B Focus Group

- Conserve bottomfish resources and where data are limited apply a precautionary approach
- Use best available science emphasizing site specific data for managing bottomfish resources in Marine Area 4B
- Alternatives for bottomfish management will consider socio-economic impacts to local communities
- Management alternatives will provide fishing opportunity on healthy stocks of bottomfish, halibut and salmon and recreational opportunities for non-consumptive users
- Adopt regulations that are enforceable

Draft Alternatives

Management alternatives were developed to consider a broad range of options

Status Quo-Current Regulations

A status quo alternative would maintain existing regulations for bottomfish in Marine Area 4B necessary for the long term sustainability of bottomfish populations while providing for a variety of uses including non-consumptive recreational opportunities.

Sport Fishing Regulations:

Management Area: Bonilla-Tatoosh line east to the Sekiu River.

Retention of rockfish other than black or blue prohibited.

Bottomfish season: Open year-round.

Fishing for bottomfish prohibited in waters deeper than 20 fathoms year-round (halibut fishing is allowed in waters deeper than 20 fathoms on days that the halibut season is open).

Bag limit: Aggregate bottomfish limit of 15 per day; no more than 6 rockfish (black or blue only), 2 lingcod and 2 cabezon.

Lingcod season: Open mid-April through mid-October, minimum size 24 inches.

Halibut season: Halibut fisheries are based on quotas determined by the International Pacific Halibut Commission and season structures described in the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan. Typically the season opens in mid May, two days per week until the quota is obtained. Bag limit: one fish per day.

Salmon season: salmon seasons are set during the North of Falcon process through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Commercial Fishing Regulations:

Management area: western boundary Bonilla-Tatoosh line.

Long line fishery landing limits:

Sablefish: 300 pounds per landing, no more than 600 pounds per month

Rockfish/lingcod: No more than 30 pounds per landing

Bottomfish pot fishery allowed with special permit issued by the Director

Alternative 1

The intent of this alternative is to enhance the quality of consumptive and non-consumptive recreational opportunities by taking a more conservative management approach intended to increase the abundance of bottomfish. Management measures under this alternative would include more restrictive regulations that would limit seasons, area or daily limits. The following proposal was developed considering input from the Area 4B Focus Group.

Sport Fishing Regulation Proposals:

A) Reduce the aggregate bottomfish limit from 15 to 12 per day maintaining current sub limits for rockfish (6 black or blue), lingcod (2), and cabezon (2); **or**

B) Reduce the aggregate bottomfish limit from 15 to 10 per day maintaining current sub limits for rockfish (6 black or blue), lingcod (2), and cabezon (2).

Commercial Fishing Regulation Proposals:

Close long line bottomfish fishery.

Retain the permit only bottomfish pot fishery in Area 4B.

Alternative 2

This alternative considers closed nearshore areas to bottomfishing that would provide additional protection for bottomfish and increased non consumptive recreational opportunities in Marine Area 4B.

Figure 1 depicts six potential areas developed based on input from the Area 4B Focus Group to consider and comment on as potential areas that would be closed to bottomfishing from 0-20 fathoms.

Although there are six areas presented for public comment it is not necessarily intended that all of them would be closed under this alternative. Comments should reflect pros and cons for each of the areas and which area(s) should be considered under this alternative.

Alternative 3

Alternative three would provide protection for all marine resources and maximize non-consumptive recreational opportunities by establishing near shore no-fishing zone(s) for all fish, shellfish and other invertebrates in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Figure 2 depicts an area extending east of Tatoosh Island to the entrance of Neah Bay in addition to the six areas depicted in Alternative 2 for discussion.

Although there are multiple areas presented for public comment it is not necessarily intended that all of them would be closed under this alternative. Comments should reflect pros and cons for each of the areas and which area(s) should be considered under this alternative.